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SENSITIVE
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KWMN](#) [PK](#)
SUBJECT: WINDS OF CHANGE FOR MUKHTAR MAI

REF: LAHORE 014

¶1. (SBU) Summary. Samson Salamat, manager for Mukhtar Mai Women's Welfare Organization (MMWWO), has disclosed a rift between Mukhtar Mai, her husband, and organization management. Salamat, worried about the power Mai may give to her husband, has chosen to leave MMWWO in March. The loss of this professional manager may cause the organization to degenerate to its previous state: an organization with no cohesive leadership and limited financial accountability being run as an extension of Mukhtar Mai's personal vision. End Summary.

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Interference from Mai's Husband
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¶2. (SBU) Samson Salamat sought a private meeting with PolOff on January 26 to discuss his future with MMWWO. He told PolOff that Mukhtar's husband had demanded a "key role" in the organization. He viewed this as a way to assume control of MMWWO. Mai's husband, according to Salamat, has been pressuring Mai for a position in the organization since their marriage. Mai has recently increased pressure on MMWWO leadership to include her husband in MMWWO's operations. Salamat fears Mai's husband is only seeking inclusion for his personal gain. Note: Mai married Nasir Abbas Gabol, a police constable from Muzzafargarh district, Punjab Province in March 2009. Mai, his second (concurrent) wife, agreed to the marriage after Gabol threatened to divorce his first wife. End note.

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Mai's Vision for the Organization
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¶3. (SBU) According to Salamat, Mai cannot differentiate between MMWWO's organizational interests and her personal interests. Mai does not understand how the organization should work, the proper role of the Board of Directors and other stakeholders, and she oversteps her bounds at times. She does not see a conflict in creating a position for her husband, despite his lack of relevant experience. Wilson Lee, Program Officer, National Endowment of Democracy (NED), echoed these same sentiments in a separate meeting with PolOff on January 13. He told PolOff that NED suspended its grant for six months in the initial stages of MMWWO development due to concerns about Mai treating MMWWO as her personal property.

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Manager to Leave the Organization

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¶4. (SBU) Salamat, MMWWO manager for 18 months, said he would leave MMWWO in March due to Mai's husband's interference in MMWWO operations. When Salamat joined the organization, he committed to staying for a year. Now he fears that Mai and her husband may discard the fiscal accounting system and institutional infrastructure established with a grant from International Rescue Committee (IRC), reftel. He was also concerned that Mai would move funds designated for the resource center to pay for school operations. Lee from NED confirmed that this has been a problem in the past and, they worked with MMWWO to explain accounting procedures. Despite his apprehension, Salamat had submitted a 60,000 USD proposal to PolOff to continue operations at Mukhtar Mai Girls Schools for one more year.

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IRC Visit to Meerwala

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¶5. (SBU) Following a six-day visit to MMWWO in Meerwala, Kristin Kim Bart, GBV Program Officer for IRC, confirmed Salamat's story in a February 9 meeting with PolOff. Bart disclosed that Mai was pressuring resource center workers to do personal favors for her and her husband's family. Board members had tried to dissolve the management committee, and to fire Salamat, in an effort to consolidate power for Mai. Bart conducted a series of meetings with resource center workers, members of the Board of Directors, and the management committee to resolve the conflict among them. At the end of her meetings, everyone agreed to remain with the organization until June. In that time, IRC would work with MMWWO to clarify the role of each

LAHORE 00000024 002 OF 002

member of the organization. Bart told PolOff that IRC would consider withholding funds from MMWWO if its board members did not uphold the constitution, which outlines power sharing and management of the organization. Suspending funds may provide Mai the tools that she needs to stand up to her family and fight for the organization. Mai is ready to fight for her school, but Bart is unsure if she has the strength or desire to stand up to her family to keep MMWWO operational.

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Comment: MMWWO Must Stand on Its Own

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¶6. (SBU) Since its inception, MMWWO has struggled to sustain its mission of women's empowerment, which depends on but cannot be subservient to Mukhtar Mai's personal celebrity. Mai's attempt to promote her husband within MMWWO illustrates her inability to differentiate between her personal interests and those of the organization. Salamat was central in turning around MMWWO and making it function like an institution, not just one woman's vision-turned-hobby. His pending departure from the organization will create a void and will again make internal control issues significant challenges to the success and sustainability of MMWWO. Additional USG funding for MMWWO should not be considered unless and until its leaders demonstrate that they can survive without constant oversight, and retaining Salamat or finding another professional manager will be key to that.

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